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P&PD 1Background Notes for DCI Trip to TurkeyDomestic Politics

1. Turkey continues to evolve slowly toward full democracy.
 - Ankara's reacceptance into the Council of Europe in 1985 signaled the beginning of its reintegration into the community of nations. On 20 November Foreign Minister Halefoglu assumed the Presidency of the Ministers Committee of the Council of Europe, a largely symbolic position which rotates periodically among all members. Also, Turkey may apply soon for membership in the European Community, another sign of Ankara's desire for full participation in European affairs.
 - The 1982 constitutional restrictions that prevent former political leaders from participating actively in politics are still in force, but press reports indicate that Prime Minister Ozal is considering an amnesty and that President Evren is not opposed. Lifting the ban would allow popular former Prime Minister Demirel to run in the 1988 election where he would have a good chance of defeating Ozal.
 - All non-communist parties were allowed to participate in the by-elections in September for 11 vacant seats in the Grand National Assembly. Ozal eased restrictions on access to state-run radio and television during the campaign.
 - Although the ruling Motherland Party won six seats, Demirel's strengthened Correct Way Party captured four, indicating that the government's main opposition in future will come from the right.
 - A National election is not due until 1988, and Ozal is not likely to have any problem staying in power until then

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2. Despite the easing of political controls, parts of the country are still under martial or emergency law -- especially in the east and southeast where Kurdish unrest is endemic.

- Kurdish separatism continues to erupt into violence periodically despite a military presence in the region. Most recently, the illegal Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) was responsible for the 19 October bombing of a radar complex in Mardin in the southeast. Turkish officials believe rebel Kurds are receiving logistical support from Syria.
- Armenian terrorism continues to be a problem. The Turks probably believe the group is receiving training from Syrian intelligence.
- A massive influx of refugees from Iran leads to periodic violence between pro- and anti-Khomeini forces in Turkey. Several former officers from the Shah's army have been assassinated. [REDACTED]

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Relations With Its Middle East Neighbors

3. The spillover of violence from the Middle East reaffirms Turkey's tendency to view itself as being surrounded by hostile nations. Ankara responds by being careful not to aggravate relations with any of its neighbors because it fears a more forthright policy might allow for the formation of hostile alliances and an escalation of support for anti-Turkish terrorist groups. In particular, Turkey repeatedly asserts its neutrality in the Gulf War. But its political relations with the two combatants are complicated by the "Kurdish problem" -- which overlaps their common borders -- and by economic vulnerability.

- In 1985 Turkey conducted one-quarter of its total trade with Iran and Iraq.
- Under Tehran's sponsorship the two principal factions of Iraq's rebellious Kurds apparently have combined forces and operate close to the Turkish border. Should Turkey decide the guerrillas are threatening its security or economy -- especially the Kirkuk oil fields in Iraq -- it may launch military attacks across the border as it did last August [REDACTED]

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